

Assembly Concurrent Resolution

No. 126

Introduced by Assembly Member Atkins
(Coauthors: Assembly Members Eggman, Grove, Melendez, and
Quirk-Silva)

April 1, 2014

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 126—Relative to women veterans.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 126, as introduced, Atkins. Women veterans.

This measure would proclaim June 12, 2014, as Women Veterans' Day and urge all citizens to join in celebrating the many contributions of women to our military forces.

Fiscal committee: no.

- 1 WHEREAS, Women have proudly served their country
2 throughout all periods of the history of the United States, whether
3 disguised as male soldiers during the American Revolution and
4 Civil War, as nurses in World War I, or as combat helicopter pilots
5 in Afghanistan; and
6 WHEREAS, Women have formally been a part of the United
7 States Armed Forces since the inception of the Army Nurse Corps
8 in 1901, but have informally served since the inception of our
9 nation's military; and
10 WHEREAS, During the American Revolution, women served
11 on the battlefield alongside the men, mainly as nurses, water
12 bearers, often called "Molly Pitchers," cooks, laundresses, and
13 saboteurs, and despite Army regulations that only men could enlist,

1 women who wanted to join in the fighting circumvented the rules
2 by masquerading as young men or boys; and

3 WHEREAS, In 1917, the Navy announced it would open
4 enlistment to women and about 12,000 female yeomen entered the
5 Navy and filled a variety of jobs including draftsmen, interpreters,
6 couriers, and translators; and

7 WHEREAS, Three hundred seven women enlisted in the Marine
8 Corps during World War I. Like their sisters in the Navy, they
9 were limited to the enlisted ranks and worked mainly in
10 Washington, D.C., doing various administrative jobs. Women's
11 service contributions in World War I showed that they either had,
12 or could quickly learn, nontraditional skills needed by the military;
13 and

14 WHEREAS, Following Pearl Harbor, Congress authorized new
15 women's components for each of the services and increased the
16 number of active duty positions in the Army and Navy Nurse
17 Corps. In May 1942, the Army was given the authority to establish
18 the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, also known as the WAACs.
19 The Navy, Coast Guard, and Marine Corps followed suit, but rather
20 than making women an auxiliary component, they opted to enroll
21 them in the reserves on the same basis as their male counterparts;
22 and

23 WHEREAS, At the end of the war in 1945, of the approximately
24 12 million people remaining in the Armed Forces, about 280,000
25 were women; and

26 WHEREAS, With the passage of the Women's Armed Services
27 Integration Act of 1948, women became a permanent part of the
28 United States military, but women continued to be restricted to 2
29 percent of the military population. That restriction was finally
30 lifted in 1967 with the amendment of the Women's Armed Services
31 Integration Act, which also opened senior officer ranks to women;
32 and

33 WHEREAS, The early 1990s were a historic time for women
34 in the military with over 40,000 women deploying in support of
35 the Persian Gulf War, making women service members more
36 visible in the eyes of the public. In addition, in 1992, the Defense
37 Authorization Act repealed combat exclusion laws that had
38 prevented women from flying combat aircrafts; and

39 WHEREAS, Women who have served in the United States
40 military are often referred to as "invisible veterans" because their

1 service contributions until the 1970s went largely unrecognized
2 by politicians, the media, academia, and the general public; and

3 WHEREAS, Even though women have been officially serving
4 in the military since the creation of the Army Nurse Corps in 1901,
5 they have not always been considered qualified for veteran status
6 for the purpose of receiving benefits from the Department of
7 Veterans Affairs. Even after women were granted veteran status,
8 issues of access, exclusion, and improper management of their
9 health care still remained; and

10 WHEREAS, It was not until well after World War II that women
11 who served in the military began to officially be recognized as
12 veterans; and

13 WHEREAS, In the late 1970s and early 1980s, many of the
14 contributions made by women in World War II were formally
15 recognized through laws that granted these women with veteran
16 status for their time in service. This opened the doors for women
17 to take advantage of programs, opportunities, and benefits from
18 the federal and state governments, the Department of Veterans
19 Affairs, and other veteran service organizations; and

20 WHEREAS, The 1980 decennial census marked the first time
21 that information on women veterans was ever captured in a large
22 national survey. At the time of the 1980 decennial census, women
23 made up just over 2 percent of the veteran population. Today, that
24 proportion has increased to almost 8 percent; and

25 WHEREAS, Over the past 20 years, the Veterans Health
26 Administration (VHA) has introduced initiatives designed to
27 improve health care access and quality of care for women veterans;
28 and

29 WHEREAS, In 2008, VHA's Women Veterans Health Strategic
30 Health Care Group began a five-year plan to redesign the nation's
31 health care delivery system for women. A fundamental component
32 of this plan was to ensure that all women veterans had access to
33 comprehensive primary care from skilled women's health
34 providers; and

35 WHEREAS, There are currently over 2 million women veterans
36 living in the United States and Puerto Rico and of those 2 million,
37 184,774 make California their home; now, therefor be it

38 *Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate*
39 *thereof concurring*, That the Legislature, hereby proclaims June
40 12, 2014, as Women Veterans' Day, and urges all citizens to join

- 1 in celebrating the many contributions of women to our military
- 2 forces; and be it further
- 3 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
- 4 of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.